

IWVWD General Manager's Column
December 15, 2015

“All We Want for Christmas is El Niño”

By Don Zdeba

Winter is upon us bringing a welcome change in the weather. Local temperatures have hovered near or below freezing on recent mornings. As the weather has transitioned from summer to fall and soon to winter, demand for water diminishes greatly as evaporative coolers are shut down and the need to irrigate outdoor landscaping decreases. It is important to remember the conservation targets that were assigned to water agencies by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) as a result of Governor Brown's Executive Order of April 1st, 2015 remain in effect at least through February 2016. For customers of Indian Wells Valley Water District that means our conservation target remains 36%. IWVWD also remains under a Conservation Order issued by the SWRCB as a result of a Notice of Violation for failing to meet the 36% conservation target after the first month the Executive Order was in effect. The Conservation Order contains ten mandated actions IWVWD is required to comply with to help ensure our conservation target is met. Through the month of November, we are at a cumulative 24.5% since June 1st. As you can imagine, with the decrease in domestic use attributable to evaporative cooler use and outdoor irrigation, the opportunity to achieve the 36% conservation target falls primarily on indoor use. Considering typical indoor uses, it is difficult to imagine how one could reduce to that level.

It is important to mention that, although IWVWD Ordinance 97 - Emergency Water Conservation Mandatory Restrictions allows for landscape irrigation three days per week, turf, plants and trees are dormant during the next few months and it is not necessary to water as often. We continue to observe and receive reports of water waste due to excessive runoff from overwatering and for watering landscape on the wrong days. As of November 1st, there are no longer restrictions on time of day for landscape watering because evaporation is essentially a non-factor during the winter months, but compliance with the allowable days to water is mandatory. If you have questions about your watering schedule, please consult our website, www.iwvwd.com or contact Customer Service at (760)375-5086.

The news media has been offering encouragement that California will benefit from a “godzilla” El Niño in coming months. There have been recent signs there may be some relief from the drought conditions of the past four years, however, we cannot allow ourselves to regress from the conservation habits we have established. The prudent approach is to hope for the best and prepare for the worst. Governor Brown recently took this approach November 13th when he gave the SWRCB the authority to extend emergency drought regulations through October 2016 if early winter conditions are unfavorable. The governor's action authorizes the State Board to extend current regulations, which are set to expire at the end of February 2016.

IWVWD staff continues to focus resources on conservation outreach and compliance. To assist you in determining where you may have opportunities to be more efficient in how you and your family use water, there is an abundance of conservation tips and information available on the District's website at www.iwvwd.com. Also available are tools such as the "20 Gallon Challenge" that lists several actions you can take and calculate your potential water savings. If you haven't already done so, I encourage "liking" and visiting the District's Facebook page regularly (IWV Water District) or following us on Twitter (@IWVWaterDist) for timely information related to state and local water issues.

As the holidays fast approach, on behalf of the IWVWD Board of Directors and staff, I want to wish you and your family all of the joys of the season. Let's hope the New Year brings the El Niño we need, but in the meantime, please continue to "Use Water Responsibly."